

October 2007

I am writing a book on the value of pausing before you are finished with your work and it seems I have forgotten my own sweet rule. This is the reason some of you have had to write and remind me that I haven't shared my journal for awhile. "Remember to pause," I keep telling my retreat ants and readers. "Remember to pause," I reminded myself early this morning. And I did! I went out to my sycamore tree before dawn, sat in my cedar swing and thought about things. It was still dark. There was a large slice of moon cradling Venus, circled by a myriad of smaller stars. It was a real standout in the eastern sky. I took a gasp of delight and then quite naturally I was drawn into silence and joy. Beauty often does that for me. Although I am aware that taking time for beauty is a spiritual act, our dear world's multitasking way of living has crept into monastic life-alas, and so I have to add to my list of spiritual practices: take some time each day to pause for beauty. After a little while I didn't even look at the star show anymore. I just sat in silence, aware that I was being anointed by beauty.

I cannot begin to explain the value of entering deeply into silence. It is something you must experience for yourself. Actually the silence is already in you. It's waiting for you. Sometimes it's good to put away your words and thoughts and sink into that place and space of nada. It may seem scary at first but slowly the scary part goes away and you discover a whole new land within you. Way down there underneath all of your anxieties and fears, underneath the noise of many words, away from your ipods and cell phones and e-mail messages-away from everything that might talk to you there is a pool of silence and when you look into that pool you see the face of God. If you go to that place often eventually you will be anointed with joy. It will be a joy that keeps company with you even in the midst of your sorrows. And so I invite you just as I daily invite myself: Remember to Pause.

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